

Living Well Through the Lens of Ecclesiastes

The Cultural Lens

"More than 80% of people say their top goal in life is to be happy, but less than half say they actually are."

(Pew Research Centre, 2023 Global Attitudes Survey)

Discuss.....

- **According to the Instagram post on the screen, what does it look like to live well as women?**
- **How does that make you feel?**

The Lens of Limits

Discuss....

- **Where do you feel your limits?**
- **How do you try to overcome or deny them?**

See your limits...

"The words of the Teacher, [a] son of David, king in Jerusalem: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless. What do people gain from all their labours at which they toil under the sun?" (1v1-3)

... of death

"Generations come and generations go but the earth remains forever" (1v4)

... of what we can do

“What is twisted cannot be straightened; What is lacking cannot be counted” (1v15)

... of what we can know

“For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; The more knowledge, the more grief” (1v18)

... of what we can control

*“I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong....
..Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come” (9v11-12)*

... of the season we're in

*“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die....” (3v1-3)*

Don't try to escape your limits...

... But embrace your limits to live well

The Lens of Gift Not Gain

The futility of pursuing gain

What gain?.....

“What do people gain from all their labours, at which they toil under the sun?” (1v3)

“What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labour under the sun?” (2v22)

“... This too is meaningless” (2v23)

Picture the scene.... much that is good

Feel the tension....

“In the created world, you can only truly enjoy what you do not worship... When you worship God’s gifts, they will never ever deliver what they promise and instead will leave you empty and broken.” (David Gibson, Living Life Backward)

Discuss...

- **Where do you most feel the tension between joy and frustration with ‘life under the sun’?**
- **Where do you most see the tendency to strive for gain in your own life?**
- **What might you be trying to achieve through your striving?**

The joy of receiving as gift

Cease striving for gain..... instead receive as gift

“A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too I see is from the hand of God” (2v24)

The ability to enjoy

“..for without him [God] who can eat or find enjoyment?” (2v25)

Commanded to enjoy

“ Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil” (9v7)

The Lens in Practice

- **Consider all of life a gift**
- **Enjoy the gift in its season**
- **Better together**
- **Cultivate an attitude of gratitude**

Discuss....

- **How well do you see all of life as a gift from God? Do you tend to compartmentalise? How might you start to change this?**
- **What gifts might we miss that Ecclesiastes would have us see as treasure?**
- **What habits could you start to cultivate that help you to remember your Creator in your daily life?**

Take Home Exercise

Read 9v7-9 and then look at this quote from David Gibson in ‘Living Life Backwards’

“It is vital to see that eating, drinking, dressing, and loving in these verses [9v7-9] do not form an exhaustive list of Gods gifts..... I think an expanded list would go something like this:

Ride a bike, see the Grand Canyon, go to the theatre, learn to make music, care for the dying, cook a meal, feed the hungry, watch a film, read a book, laugh with some friends until it makes you cry, play football, run a marathon, snorkel in the ocean, listen to Mozart, ring your parents, write a letter, play with your kids, spend your money, learn a language, plant a church, start a school, speak about Christ, travel to somewhere you’ve never been, adopt a child, give away your fortune and then some, shape someone else’s life by laying down your own”

Now write your own list in the box below!

Write your own.....

Appendix

Gibson, David (2017) *Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in the Light of the End*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway

Mckelvey, Doug (2017) *Every Moment Holy, Volume I: New Liturgies for Daily Life*. Nashville: Rabbit Room Press

Mckelvey, Doug (2021) *Every Moment Holy, Volume II: Death, Grief and Hope*. Nashville: Rabbit Room Press

Mckelvey, Doug (2024) *Every Moment Holy, Volume III: The Work of the People*. Nashville: Rabbit Room Press

www.everymomentholy.com/app